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Riverfest celebrates wildlife and watersheds

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NEWS RELEASE

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May 13, 1999

Contact: Lisa Mills, director, Montana Natural History Center, (406) 327-0405.

RIVERFEST CELEBRATES WILDLIFE AND WATERSHEDS

MISSOULA--

Kids and grown-ups alike are invited to join in the fun at RiverFest, an annual celebration of wildlife and watersheds sponsored by the Montana Natural History Center.

RiverFest gets under way at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 22, at the Nature Center, MNHC's new home next to the Bitterroot River at Fort Missoula. The day's events conclude at 4 p.m., and there is no charge to attend.

Activities throughout the day include walks devoted to bird-watching, native plants and wetlands, and hands-on presentations about "naturescaping," composting and attracting beneficial insects and birds.

People of all ages are invited to get their hands dirty in one of three fledgling garden projects: the Native Prairie Project, the Backyard Habitat Garden and the Kids' Garden.

"We're not only going to learn about protecting wildlife and watersheds, but we're also going to be doing it," said Lisa Mills, MNHC director. "We're going to take a landscape that needs to be restored and we're going to begin the work."

Budding gardeners may help with planting throughout the day. Tools will be available, but volunteers are encouraged to bring their own.

The gardens are part of a restoration project on 80 acres of land owned by The

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University of Montana. MNHC, in conjunction with UM's Division of Biological Sciences, has entered a long-term agreement with the University to use the land for educational and research projects.

"This is a place that we hope the public will keep using and coming out to year after year," Mills said.

RiverFest also will feature children's games, a nature adventure playground, arts and crafts, educational booths, exhibits and a native plant sale. Musical entertainment will contribute to the festivities. Food booths will be available, or festival-goers may bring a picnic lunch.

Those attending the RiverFest may choose from:

10 a.m.

- a bird-watching walk along the Bitterroot River, led by Sue Reel.
- "Weeds to Wildflowers," a native plants and weeds walk led by Marilyn Marler.

11 a.m.

- a riparian area and wetlands walk led by Bob Ehrhart.
- a presentation on the Backyard and Schoolyard Habitat Certification Program, a nationwide project of the National Wildlife Federation and sponsored locally by the Montana Natural History Center. Lisa Mills will discuss the program and talk about plants and landscaping that benefit wildlife.

11:30 a.m.

- a tree-planting in memory of Kari Lind, late MNHC staff member.

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Noon

- Picnic, food booths open.

12:30 p.m.

- "Dr. Loonacy," a performance by Denny Olson.

1 p.m.

- a presentation on "Naturescaping" by Madeline Mazurski of Montana Native Landscapes.
- a presentation on creating nesting platforms for osprey, courtesy of the Montana Power Co.

1:30 p.m.

- a presentation on French-intensive gardening methods, which use less space and water than regular techniques, by Josh Slotnick of UM's Program in Ecological Agricultural Society (PEAS).

2 p.m.

- a presentation on "Taking the Pulse of the River: Intro to Field Monitoring and Aquatic Insects," by Wendy Moore.
- a presentation on "Leftovers to Loam: Intro to Composting" by Helen Atthowe.

2:30 p.m.

- a repeat of "Taking the Pulse of the River: Intro to Field Monitoring and Aquatic Insects."
- a presentation on "Beyond Banana Peels: Advanced Composting" by Helen Atthowe.

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3 p.m.

- a presentation on "Microscoping with Mushrooms" by Larry Evans of the Western Montana Mycological Association.

3:15 p.m.

- a discussion of "The 15 Most Wanted Insects and Birds in Your Garden" by Helen Atthowe.

The Nature Center is located in the historic Post Headquarters Building in front of Officer's Row at Fort Missoula. It is open to the public. For more information, call 327-0405.

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